

Washington City Council

111 North 100 East
Washington City, UT 84780
Phone (435) 656-6300
Fax (435) 656-6370
www.washingtoncity.org

Minutes Workshop Meeting November 12, 2013

Present: Mayor Kenneth F. Neilson, Councilmen Bill Hudson, Thad Seegmiller, Kress Staheli, Ronald Truman, Jeff Turek, City Attorney Jeff Starkey, City Manager Roger Carter, City Recorder Danice Bulloch, Deputy Recorder Tara Pentz, Public Works Director Mike Shaw, IT Technician Kelly L. Carlson, Human Resource Director Ruth Holyoak, Administrative Services Manager Kimberly Ruesch, Treasurer Kerry Wheelwright, Police Chief Jim Keith, Fire Chief Brent Hafen, Leisure Services Director Barry Blake, Community Development Director Drew Ellerman, Utilities Supervisor Aaron Olsen, Audience: Rex Torgersen, Brenna DeBry-Hansen, Daylene Ure, Garth Nisson

Meeting commenced at 6:02 P.M.

1. Approval of the Agenda.

Councilman Truman made a motion to approve the agenda. Councilman Hudson seconded the motion; which passed with the following role call vote:

Councilman Hudson Aye
Councilman Seegmiller Aye
Councilman Truman Aye
Councilman Turek Aye

2. Review of the board audit report for October.

The Council reviewed the board audit report with Administrative Services Manager Kimberly Ruesch.

Discussion concerning a Utility Billing problem on an equal pay schedule. Brenna DeBry-Hansen

City Manager Roger Carter reviewed:

Ms. Hansen has been on budget-billing for several years and has been running a deficit for more than a year. All deficits and credits are noted on the individuals bill under the payment amount on the monthly bill. Her budget billing rate should have been adjusted higher last January, but for

^{*}Councilman Kress Staheli arrived at 6:04 P.M.

some reason was not. When she came and talked to me, her total deficit was close to \$1,600. She wanted the City to write this amount off due to that fact that it had not been adjusted in January like it was suppose to be. She acknowledged that she had used the consumption, but the lack of adjustment on her bill is what had caused her this problem. She had also made no payment for the months of August and September. At the time of our discussion, I had asked her what she felt the value of this inconvenience was, and she ultimately indicated that the whole amount should be covered by the City. I told her that was not an option for me to consider but only the Council. The following were the recommendations of the City:

- 1. We changed out her meter to ensure that it was billing correctly (meter tested with no errors)
- 2. She needed to catch up on her August and September payment (\$251/month)
- 3. We encouraged her to apply for HEAT. She did this, and we received a \$300 emergency payment, but she did not quality for any more assistance.
- 4. We offered to allow her to use her deposit to assist in paying the debit; even though she technically didn't qualify for a refund of the deposit.
- 5. We informed her that we had to adjust her budget-billing from \$251 per month to \$306 per month in order for her to avoid a continued deficit.
- 6. This then gave her a balance to pay of \$639.64, which I agreed to allow her to pay back over a period of 24 months.
- 7. If she kept up-to-date on her payments the City would waive the last \$200 for the inconvenience. She was not interested in the last two items and wanted to appear before the Council. Her current bill is up-to-date having been paid for by a third party.

City Manager Carter then stated, since this is a "hardship" type request staff has no recommendation other than to provide to the Council some history.

Brenna DeBry-Hansen stated she had an issue with her utility bill, and she did not feel what the City Manager offered was fair. She does not disagree that she has used the power being billed, but she does not feel it should be her responsibility to pay for the accumulated balance because her equal payment amount was not increased. She reviewed her equal plan situation with Council. After a couple of calls to the utility office, she was able to contact Aaron Olsen, the Utilities Supervisor. He instructed her not to make a payment until he was able to rectify the situation. They have caught up with the past due payments, however, they had a balance accumulating for two years without increasing the equal pay amount. She then reviewed what was offered by the City Manager. She feels like there should be some responsibility taken on the part of the City rather than using their deposit money for the bill. She is willing to pay what is fair, but she feels some of the responsibility should fall on the City.

Councilman Truman asked what she feels should be fair.

Ms. Hansen stated she feels the only thing, which would be fair is if the City were to pay for at least half.

Councilman Turek clarified the balance as it is today is \$854.

Ms. Hansen confirmed he was correct.

Councilman Seegmiller explained he was involved in a similar situation when the software was

changed. He does understand what happened, but other than working with the individuals on a repayment plan, he does not feel it would be appropriate to not have them pay their bill either.

Ms. Hansen stated she feels like some of the amount should be absorbed.

Councilman Seegmiller stated the City is willing to do many concessions, but he does not feel it is appropriate to write off any amount of the bill.

Councilman Hudson stated he did some research with the Public Utilities Commission, and they will allow them to go back for 12 months for similar incidents.

Councilman Staheli stated obviously the power was used, but the City has a responsibility to send proper billing.

Aaron Olsen explained the account was billing properly, there were no misreads or errors. The problems was simply the budget billing. Budget billing is a difficult situation, because we are averaging what the customer is using over a one year period.

Councilman Seegmiller clarified over a one year period, the bill would remain the same.

Councilman Staheli reviewed the balanced billing program.

City Manager Carter stated a good explanation is an escrow on a loan program. Sometimes an adjustment will go up or down beginning on the first of the year.

Councilman Turek stated he understands why the utility office said the account would look fine because there is sometimes a large deficit.

Councilman Seegmiller commented maybe the Council needs to have a discussion about no longer having budget billing.

City Manager Carter stated many times the consumer will be hit very hard during the summer months because of the extreme heat, and the need to run air conditioning. However, there is a challenge with budget billing. He then reviewed the situation with Council with regard to the Utility Billing.

Councilman Staheli reviewed the full balance along with each payment with Council.

Councilman Seegmiller stated he understands where the \$200 credit came from. However, he feels it would be better to have some type of policy in place.

Councilman Turek stated he feels we are making concessions with allowing 24 months for a repayment. He feels the City is being more than fair by crediting \$200. It falls onto somebody else's shoulders to make up the \$200, and it is more than generous.

Ms. Hansen stated she feels at least half of the balance should be paid by the City.

Councilman Hudson agrees with Ms Hansen as he feels it is a reasonable amount.

Ms. Hansen stated she started calling about 6 months into the year about the problem.

City Manager Carter stated according to the Ordinance he is only authorized to offer what he has without coming to Council.

Councilman Truman asked what the likelihood would be of others being in similar situation.

City Manager Carter explained we very well could find ourselves in this situation each year. It is somewhat the responsibility of the consumer. We do the best we can, but beyond that, it is an obligation on the part of the rate payer.

Councilman Staheli mentioned it could go both ways, if the consumer were to overpay, would the City be required to pay the money back.

City Manager Carter confirmed the City would have to return the money or give a credit to the bill.

Ms. Ruesch also explained Canyon Breeze had a situation where they were being double billed. The City went back an entire year, and gave credit for those charges.

Councilman Seegmiller stated he is concerned about the Staff having any ability to give credit. He prefers having a policy in place for any type of credit.

City Manager Carter stated he should not have offered a \$200 credit because the problem is not a billing error based on consumption. The only reason he suggested the credit, was because of the inconvenience.

Councilman Truman stated because the \$200 was offered he does not feel it can be pulled off the table. However, the consumption has been taken, and it needs to be paid for. We cannot create new policies for each situation.

Councilman Seegmiller asked if there can be some type of message on the budget billing, which alerts those on the program of their current balance.

Ms. Ruesch stated they can have a message placed on the budget billing. Budget billing is a benefit for residents. However, it is a huge problem, because there is no way to control the usage by the customer, so there is a possibility of having a huge deficit at the end of the year. Ideally they would like to true up the account at the end of each year, in order to keep the budget billing even.

Councilman Seegmiller asked Ms Ruesch if she had the balances from the previous years.

Ms. Ruesch explained she currently does not have the totals, but she believes the deficit was approximately \$500, in December 2012.

Councilman Seegmiller stated if Council can determine what a fair number is, he would be prepared to make a decision.

Councilman Turek stated his opinion is Staff has been more than fair with a \$200 credit, and the difference in the balance, which would need to be paid over the 24 months is only \$12 a month, which is less than movie tickets.

Councilman Turman stated Staff has offered the \$200, and it cannot be taken back. He ask the \$200 amount be taken off the bill now, and then the remaining balance be spread over the 24 month period.

Councilman Seegmiller suggested having a policy in place for the budget billing.

Councilman Turek stated if we look at our in office procedures, these can be taken care of without a policy.

Councilman Staheli stated there have been many improvements over the past year. He also feels these can be taken care of with a policy.

Councilman Hudson asked if the situation would have been rectified without the call from Ms. Hansen.

Mr. Olsen it would have been taken care of, as they systematically have went through the budget billing accounts. In many cases, the City has had to pay out significant amounts when there have been billing errors in the other direction.

City Manager Carter stated in most cases budget billing works very well. He likes to be able to accommodate the residents with the program. The Utility Office works very diligently, and have been able to help out many individuals with the program.

Ms. Ruesch reviewed the budget billing process with Council.

City Manager Carter stated currently the bill has been paid off, so the \$200 would be applied as a credit.

Councilman Staheli suggested to Ms Hansen of having the Power Director do an energy audit.

4. Discussion and review of 2015 FY Budget with individual departments. Roger Carter, City Manager

City Manager Roger Carter explained he has asked each department to review with Council what they would like them to consider for the 2015 budget year as well as their department goals.

City Manager Carter reviewed his objectives.

*see attached

Mayor Neilson asked if we are keeping the same budget for Economic Development.

City Manager Carter stated he is not proposing an increase, because he does not know why we would increase, and what would be done with the money.

Mayor Neilson stated he would like to personally dedicate more time up North and Southern California, along with other areas and States, in order to talk with businesses. He would like to make sure there is enough money budgeted for him to be able to do the traveling.

Councilman Truman asked what other Cities do for Economic Development.

City Manager Carter stated in the State of Utah, they have different types of Economic Development, one being a full-time staff member, a contracted individual, and some areas use either their City Manager or Mayor.

Councilman Truman suggested asking the other areas, in order to see which would be more beneficial for Washington City.

Councilman Turek stated having a full-time person does not pay for itself. He likes using Stewart because he does not charge Washington City anything. Locating businesses does take time.

Councilman Staheli asked when a developer is brought to our City, who then takes their hand, and leads them through our City. Community Development cannot be the ones to take them through the process, when they have to be the ones to require guidelines, and land use requirements.

Councilman Turek stated he feels it would be a great job for the Mayor.

Councilman Hudson stated we have 22 departments to review, and he does not feel now is the appropriate time for an Economic Development discussion.

City Recorder Danice Bulloch reviewed the objectives for Recorder's Office.

*see attached

Administrative Services Manager Kimberly Ruesch reviewed the objectives for the Utilities Department and Finance Department.

*see attached

Councilman Hudson asked if there is newer technology for downloading meters without having to drive past all of the houses.

Ms. Ruesch stated there is additional technology, which she will have either the Power Department or Public Works Department address as it would take a large up front expense, and they have more information.

Human Resource Director Ruth Holyoak reviewed objectives for the Human Resource Department.

*see attached

Councilman Turek asked if the part-time person would be handling paperwork.

Ms. Holyoak stated they would mainly be doing new hire paperwork, and inputting. We have numerous new hires, and trainings, which they can take care of, which would allow her the time to take care of any issues with employees and the more intense aspects of the Human Resource Department.

Councilman Turek asked the cost on the pre-employment drug test.

Ms. Holyoak stated it is approximately \$35, and is paid by Washington City.

City Treasurer Kerry Wheelwright reviewed objectives for the Treasurer Department.

*see attached

City Manager Carter reviewed the objectives for the Justice Court.

*see attached

Councilman Seegmiller asked about the safety issues for the Clerks Office, which have not been addressed.

City Manager Carter stated bullet-proof glass has been requested for the front office. However, it is at a cost of approximately \$12,000 to \$13,000. It is an amount we do not have at this point, so they have not included it in the request at this time.

IT Technician Kelly L. Carlson reviewed objectives for the IT Department.

*see attached

Councilman Turek asked about the part-time moving to full-time.

Mr. Carlson stated they have an approval of a part-time person for 2014, which they hoped to go full-time in 2015.

Councilman Turek asked what else we are doing with the GIS Department.

Mr. Carlson stated when the GIS began, he had to start from scratch which has to be maintained by data collection, and inputting all new information for the City. Anything we map become a huge benefit to the City.

Community Development Director Drew Ellerman reviewed his objectives for the Building and Zoning Departments.

*see attached

Councilman Turek asked if part-time personnel is adequate.

Councilman Hudson stated he is concerned about hiring people who are going to have to be let go if building slows down. He would suggest looking into contracting the inspectors.

Mr. Ellerman stated he is hoping as the area grows, we are more likely to get individuals who are semi-retired, who would prefer to work part-time.

Leisure Services Director Barry Blake reviewed objectives for the Parks, Cemetery, Golf Course and Community Center.

*see attached

Councilman Turek asked what the biggest challenges are with the Veterans Park Bathrooms.

Mr. Blake explained they are not an adequate restroom facility for the size of the events held in the park. Also, they are not up to date, and do not provide the privacy they should.

Councilman Staheli asked the time frame on the Virgin River Trailhead and the Soccer Park.

Mr. Blake explained they are working with SITLA on the trailhead, and there is a budget for 2016 for all four soccer fields.

Councilman Seegmiller asked where they intend to do the cardio expansion.

Mr. Blake reviewed the potential locations of additional cardio machines.

The Council discussed the issues with the EZ Facility System program, which is in their proposal to replace.

Mayor Neilson mentioned he was approached about holding regional or national events in our gyms.

Mr. Blake explained currently they are limited to the events they can hold because the gymnastics gym is always taken. However, in the future, they would definitely like to move in that direction.

Police Chief Jim Keith reviewed objectives for the Police and Animal Control Departments.

*see attached

Councilman Turek asked what the thoughts are about putting two officers in a car.

Chief Keith stated there are some benefits, however, there are some serious drawbacks. We have many known gang members in our City, along with drug violations, which require an additional officer. On general traffic stops there is only one officer unless there is an issue where they have

to call an additional officer to the scene.

Councilman Staheli asked how many detectives we have.

Chief Keith stated we have two positions for detectives. At this time, we have one detective on staff, as one of our detectives just took a position up north. We will be replacing this open position in January.

Fire Chief Brent Hafen reviewed objectives for the Fire Department.

*see attached

Councilman Turek asked if the budget for Family Nights for the Firefighters was used for the Washington City Night.

Chief Hafen explained it was the only account available for use. He would like to replenish the account because it is really important for the community and the department.

Chief Hafen explained the reason for the new station in the Coral Canyon Area and the drop in the ISO rating due to the fire station locations.

City Manager Carter reviewed objectives for the Power Department.

*see attached

Councilman Turek stated one of his biggest concerns with our Power Department is the successor for Kelly. We are just not going to be able to get a seasoned employee like we currently have.

City Manager Carter stated we certainly have a couple of employees who could work in that direction, but if he were to retire anytime soon we may have to bring from the outside.

Public Works Director Mike Shaw reviewed objectives for the Water, Streets, Sewer, Storm Water, Irrigation Department and Fleet Management.

*see attached

Councilman Turek clarified they are looking to move the part-time employee to a full-time employee.

Councilman Truman asked if we have any plans for Mall Drive if this gets constructed.

Mr. Shaw stated Merrill Road got left out of the plan, but the right of way will need to be purchased, and construction completed, for where Mall Drive will connect in the fields.

Councilman Staheli asked if construction of 3090 South would make more sense than constructing Merrill Road, since the School District plans to construct a school on 3090 South.

Mr. Shaw stated it would be a viable option. However, 3090 South could not be constructed with impact fees. The road also has boundaries in St. George City and Washington County, which neither of them would be willing to invest in the construction. There are some options for development of 3090 South, Staff has been working with the developer of one of the properties with a proposed development. Staff is having a sight tour with the MPO for the anticipated roads in order to try and obtain some funding.

Councilman Staheli asked if the County property is in a specific City.

City Attorney Starkey stated the particular County property is slated for annexation to Washington City.

City Manager Carter expressed his thanks to the departments, and the work they have done. He would hope the Mayor and Council can set some time to review their priorities for the funds.

5. Adjournment

Councilman Hudson made a motion to adjourn the Regular Meeting. Councilman Truman seconded the motion; which passed with the following role call vote:

eal of Wash

Councilman Hudson	Aye
Councilman Seegmiller	Aye
Councilman Staheli	Aye
Councilman Truman	Aye
Councilman Turek	Aye

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

Passed and approved this 26th day of November 2013.

Washington City

Senneth F. Neilson, Mayor

Attest by:

Danice B. Bulloch, CMC

City Recorder

